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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: IRAQ'S PARLIAMENT IN WINTER: SECURITY, LOGISTICS  
LIMIT WORKING HOURS

(U) Classified by Deputy Political Counselor Charles O.  
Blaha, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Since Iraq's Council of Representatives (CoR) returned from recess at the end of October, sessions have averaged 3-4 hours a day. This is due to difficulty assembling a quorum; the combination of less daylight and security concerns; and poor work habits. In addition to the short hours, the CoR is following a one week on/one week off schedule. EmbOffs are urging the CoR to meet more frequently and not recess before completing priority legislation. End Summary.

Sessions Do Not Begin on Time

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¶2. (SBU) Since the CoR's inception, convening sessions at the announced time (usually 10:00 am or 11:00 am) has been difficult. The CoR leadership has encouraged members to be early and on time for sessions, but rarely has the CoR had a quorum (138 members) present to allow sessions to begin on time. In fact, the CoR has started its six November sessions at around 11:30 am.

¶3. (C) There are several reasons for the inability to start sessions on time. CoR committees often hold meetings before the sessions. Some CoR members, particularly those who do not live in the International Zone (IZ), have difficulty arriving on time due to the diversions and detours and long waits at the IZ checkpoints. Some CoR members simply do not take the work seriously.

Less Daylight and Security Concerns

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¶4. (C) A significant number of CoR members live outside the IZ, must arrive home before dark due to security concerns, and therefore must leave the CoR earlier on short winter days. These short sessions will likely continue until the spring, when days get longer, or until more CoR members reside in the IZ. In the winter, darkness falls at around 4:30 pm; non-IZ residents start to leave about 3:30.

¶5. (SBU) In addition, the CoR must break early enough to allow its members to have lunch -- an almost sacred tradition at the CoR. Sessions are rarely able to resume if members break for lunch, particularly with the short days (none of the November sessions have successfully reconvened after lunch -- most are adjourned before lunch).

¶6. (SBU) The CoR is scheduled to recess at the end of December. The CoR currently follows a de facto one week on/one week off schedule. If the CoR continues this schedule, there will be approximately 18 more sessions before the end of the year.

¶7. (C) Comment: The CoR has a full legislative agenda. Iraq's Constitution stipulates that the CoR cannot go into winter recess until it has passed the national budget; the CoR has yet to receive the budget from the central government. The CoR should also complete work on the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) law, provincial powers, and setting a provincial election date. EmbOffs are urging the CoR to meet more frequently and not to recess before dealing with priority legislation. End Comment.

KHALILZAD